

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claim 1-14 (cancelled)

Claim 15 (currently amended): A vehicle ~~steering~~ linkage member comprising:

a socket; and

a stud having a ball end portion received in said socket and supported for pivotal movement relative to said socket, said stud having a longitudinal axis, said stud having a shank portion projecting from said socket and centered on said axis;

said shank portion of said ball stud including a predetermined weakened portion, said predetermined weakened portion having a cross-sectional configuration that is not centered on said axis[.] said predetermined weakened portion being substantially linear and having a substantially uniform cross-sectional configuration.

Claim 16 (previously presented): A linkage member as set forth in claim 15 wherein said shank portion of said ball stud has a circular cross-sectional configuration centered on said axis and said predetermined weakened portion has a circular cross-sectional configuration that is eccentric to said axis.

Claim 17 (previously presented): A linkage member as set forth in claim 15 wherein said predetermined weakened portion buckles under a predetermined amount of force.

Claims 18-21 (canceled)

Claim 22 (currently amended) A linkage member comprising:

a shank extending axially along a first axis, said shank having a first portion with a first outer surface that extends entirely around a circumference of said shank and is centered on said first axis;

said shank including a narrowed second portion at a predetermined location along said first axis, said narrowed second portion having a cross-sectional area less than a cross-sectional area of said first portion, said shank adapted to buckle at said narrowed second portion under a predetermined axial load,

said narrowed second portion of said shank including a second outer surface that extends entirely around said circumference of said shank and is located entirely within a projection of said cross-sectional area of said first portion, said narrowed second portion being centered on a second axis that is offset relative to said first axis[[]] said narrowed second portion being substantially linear and having a substantially uniform cross-sectional configuration.

Claim 23 (previously presented) The linkage member of claim 22 wherein said first and second outer surfaces are cylindrical, said entire second outer surface being located radially inwardly, relative to said first axis, of said first outer surface.

Claim 24 (previously presented) The linkage member of claim 23 wherein said narrowed second portion of said shank includes first and second opposite ends, a first annular tapered surface connecting said first outer surface to said second outer surface at said first end of said narrowed second portion and a second annular tapered surface connecting said first outer surface to said second outer surface at said second end of said narrowed

second portion, said first and second annular tapered surfaces being asymmetric about said first axis.

Claim 25 (previously presented) The linkage member of claim 23 wherein said shank has a first circular cross-section and said narrowed portion has a second circular cross-section that is non-concentric with said first circular cross-section.

Claim 26 (previously presented) The linkage member of claim 22 wherein said second axis extends parallel to said first axis.

Claim 27 (previously presented) The linkage member of claim 26 said narrowed second portion of said shank extends straight along said second axis and parallel to said first axis.

Claim 28 (previously presented) The linkage member of claim 23 wherein said first and second axes are linear and are parallel to each other.

Claims 29-37 (allowed)